

Rules Regarding Political Activities of Air Force Personnel

48 FW/JA

POC: Capt Thomas M. Schmidt, 226-3553

It is DoD policy to encourage members of the Armed Forces to carry out the obligations of citizenship. That being said, there are restrictions on both active duty and civilian employees of the Air Force.

ACTIVE DUTY: The rules for active duty personnel are derived from DoD Directive 1344.10.

Active duty USAF personnel **MAY NOT**:

- Participate, as more than a spectator, in partisan political fundraising activities (except as permitted below), rallies, conventions (including making speeches), management of campaigns, or debates.
- Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election, affect the course or outcome of an election, solicit votes for a particular candidate or issue, or require or solicit political contributions from others.
- Allow or publish partisan political articles, letters, or endorsements signed or written by the member that solicit votes for or against a partisan party, candidate, or cause (other than a letter to an editor as noted below).
- Serve in any official capacity with or be listed as a sponsor of a partisan political club.
- Speak before a partisan political gathering, including any gathering that promotes a partisan political party, candidate, or cause.
- Participate in any radio, television, or other program or discussion as an advocate for or against a partisan party, candidate, or cause.
- Solicit or otherwise engage in fundraising activities in Federal facilities for any political cause or candidate.
- March or ride in a partisan political parade, whether in uniform or not.
- Display a partisan political sign, banner, or similar device visible to the public at one's residence on a military installation, even if that residence is part of a privatized housing development.
- Attend partisan political events as an official representative of the Armed Forces, except as a color guard member at certain events.
- Make a campaign contribution to or receive or solicit a campaign contribution from any other active duty member.

Active duty USAF personnel **MAY**:

- Register, vote, and express personal opinions on political candidates and issues, but not as a representative of the Armed Forces.
- Promote and encourage others to exercise their voting franchise, if such promotion does not constitute use of their official authority or influence to interfere with the outcome of any election.
- Express opinions via Facebook, Twitter, personal blogs, etc., so long as they are personal accounts, targeting all followers and not intended to influence subordinates one way or another.
 - Accounts **MAY NOT** be updated with political statements while on duty or in the federal workplace.
 - Accounts **MAY NOT** include links to donation or campaign contribution sites.
 - Be aware of who reads your online posts, especially those who may supervise other airmen, so as not to influence subordinates.
- Join a partisan or nonpartisan political club and attend its meetings when not in uniform and not in official capacity.
- Serve as an election official, if such service is not as a representative of a partisan political party, does not interfere with the performance of military duties, is performed when not in uniform, and with SecAF approval.
- Sign a petition for a specific legislative action or a petition to place a candidate's name on an official election ballot, if the signing does not obligate the member to engage in partisan political activity and is done as a private citizen, not as a representative of the Armed Forces.

- Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper expressing personal views on public issues or political candidates, if such action is not part of an organized letter-writing campaign or a solicitation of votes for or against a political party or partisan political cause or candidate.

-- If the letter identifies the member as on active duty, it must clearly state that the views expressed are those of the individual only and not those of the AF or DoD.

- Make monetary contributions to a political organization, party, or committee favoring a particular candidate or slate of candidates.

- Display a political bumper sticker on the member's private vehicle.

- Attend partisan and nonpartisan political fundraising activities, meetings, rallies, debates, conventions, or activities as a spectator when not in uniform and when no inference or appearance of official sponsorship, approval, or endorsement can reasonably be drawn.

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE AF: The conduct of most civilian employees of the USAF is guided by the Hatch Act (5 USC 7321-7327) and implementing regulations (5 CFR Part 734 B and C). Additional restrictions apply to SES personnel or "further restricted employees."

Civilian employees *MAY NOT*:

- Use their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the results on any election.

- Solicit or receive political contributions or allow their official titles to be used in political fundraising.

- Run for partisan office (except as independent candidates in certain local elections).

- Participate in political activity while on duty or in a government facility or vehicle.

Civilian employees *MAY*:

- Be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections.

- Join and be an active member of a political party or club.

- Sign and circulate nominating petitions.

- Campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, and municipal ordinances.

- Express opinions about candidates and issues.

- Express opinions via Facebook, Twitter, personal blogs, etc., so long as they are personal accounts, targeting all followers and not intended to influence subordinates one way or another

-- Accounts ***MAY NOT*** be updated with political statements while on duty or in the federal workplace

- Campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections.

- Contribute money to political organizations.

- Distribute campaign literature in partisan elections.

- Attend and give a speech at a political fundraiser, rally or meeting.

- Hold office in political clubs or parties.

***** *If you have further questions, contact your Ethics Counselor, 48 FW/JA, at DSN 226-3553.* *****